

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-18, which are all of the pending claims, as being anticipated by or obvious over U.S. patent application 2002/0042846 A1 (Bottan, et al.). Specifically, Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-14 and 16-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being fully anticipated by Bottan, et al.; and Claims 3, 9 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over Bottan, et al.

This opportunity is being taken to amend independent Claims 1, 7 and 13 to better distinguish over the prior art. Also, changes are being made to dependent Claims 5, 6, 11, 12, 17 and 18 to keep the language of these claims consistent with the language of the independent claims from which they depend.

Applicants respectfully submit that, as presented herewith, Claims 1-18 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable.

The present invention generally relates to providing help to people with disabilities by organizing a network of volunteers. A database is established holding information about the disabled people and the volunteers. In particular, the database includes information identifying a disability for each disabled person in the network, and a disability that each volunteer is willing to assist with. When a disabled person makes a request for help, this database is searched to find a volunteer who can assist with the disability of the person making the request.

Bottan, et al. does not disclose or suggest this way of matching a volunteer with the person making the request. Bottan, et al. discloses a personal support network. However, with this network, when a subscriber sends a message to the network, the request is passed on to a group of individuals, such as the family or friends of the subscriber. The network of

Bottan, et al. does not address the problem of matching a person having a specific disability with a volunteer willing to assist with that specific disability.

Independent Claims 1, 7 and 13 are herein being amended to describe the above-discussed feature of this invention. In particular, each of these claims sets forth a database, and these claims are being amended to indicate that the database includes information identifying, for each of the persons with disabilities, at least one specific disability said person has, and for each of the volunteers, at least one specific disability said volunteer is willing to assist. Claims 1 and 13 are also being amended to set forth the step of matching at least one of the volunteers with at least one of the persons with disabilities by finding, through said database, one of the volunteers who is willing to assist with the specific disability said at least one of the persons with disabilities has. Claim 7, which is directed to a system for providing help to people with disabilities, is being amended to include means for performing this matching.

This feature of the invention is of utility because it helps to provide people who have specific needs with volunteers who are willing to assist with that specific need. For instance, as discussed in the application, a blind person riding the train to work may be matched with a volunteer who happens to be on that train and who is willing to read to blind people. As another example, a hearing impaired person may be matched with a volunteer who knows sign language to communicate with a third person.

The other references of record have been reviewed and they are believed to be no more pertinent than Bottan, et al. In particular, these other references do not disclose or suggest, in the contexts of independent Claims 1, 7 or 13, the above-discussed way to match

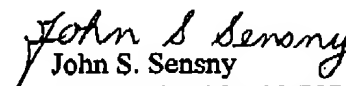
people who have specific disabilities with volunteers who are willing to assist those specific disabilities.

Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 1, 7 and 13 and the prior art, and because of the advantages associated with those differences, Claims 1, 7 and 13 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 2-6 are dependent from Claim 1 and are allowable therewith; and Claims 8-12 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 7. Likewise, Claims 14-18 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 13.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made."

The Examiner is, accordingly, respectfully requested to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1, 2 4-8, 10-14 and 16-18 under 35 U.S.C. §102 and the rejection of Claims 3, 9 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103, and to allow Claims 1-18. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is asked to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,


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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17 and 18 as set forth below.

1. (Once Amended) A method of providing help to people with disabilities, comprising the steps:

a) organizing a network of people with disabilities and of volunteers for helping people with disabilities, each of the persons with disabilities and each of the volunteers having a portable, wireless communications device;

b) establishing a database having information about the people with disabilities and about the volunteers, said information identifying (1) for each of the persons with disabilities, at least one specific disability said person has, and (2) for each of the volunteers, at least one specific disability said volunteer is willing to assist;

c) at least one of the persons with disabilities, using one of the wireless communications devices to transmit a request for help; and

d) matching at least one of the volunteers with said at least one of the persons with disabilities by finding, through said database, one of the volunteers who is willing to assist with the specific disability said at least one of the persons with disabilities has, and said at least one of the volunteers receiving the request for help via one of the wireless communications devices.

5. (Once Amended) A method according to Claim 2, wherein:

the step of establishing a database includes the steps of

i) establishing a first database having information about the persons with disabilities, and

ii) establishing a second database having information about the volunteers; and
the [searching] matching step includes the step of the network searching the first and second databases to select and match volunteers and people with disabilities.

6. (Once Amended) A method according to Claim 2, wherein the [searching] matching step includes the step of:
using a matching server to search the people with disabilities and the volunteers to find a list of candidate volunteers and methods of help;
sending a request to each of the candidate volunteers;
interacting with the candidate volunteers to find a final choice volunteer; and
sending a final request to the final choice volunteer.

7. (Once Amended) A system for providing help to people with disabilities, comprising:
a network of people with disabilities and of volunteers for helping people with disabilities, each of the persons with disabilities and each of the volunteers having a portable, wireless communications device; and
a database having information about the people with disabilities and about the volunteers, said information identifying (1) for each of the persons with disabilities, at least one specific disability said person has, and (2) for each of the volunteers, at least one specific disability said volunteer is willing to assist;
at least one of the persons with disabilities using one of the wireless communications devices to transmit a request for help; and

matching at least one of the volunteers with said at least one of the persons with disabilities by finding, through said database, one of the volunteers who is willing to assist with the specific disability said at least one of the persons with disabilities has, and said at least one of the volunteers receiving the request for help via one of the wireless communications devices.

11. (Once Amended) A system according to Claim 8, wherein:

the database includes

i) a first database having information about the persons with disabilities, and

ii) a second database having information about the volunteers; and

the [searching] matching means includes means for searching the first and second databases to select and match volunteers and people with disabilities.

12. (Once Amended) A system according to Claim 8, wherein the [searching] matching means includes:

a matching server to search the people with disabilities and the volunteers to find a list of candidate volunteers and methods of help;

means for sending a request to each of the candidate volunteers;

means for interacting with the candidate volunteers to find a final choice volunteer; and

means for sending a final request to the final choice volunteer.

13. (Once Amended) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for providing help to people with disabilities, said method steps comprising:

- a) organizing a network of people with disabilities and of volunteers for helping people with disabilities, each of the persons with disabilities and each of the volunteers having a portable, wireless communications device;
- b) establishing a database having information about the people with disabilities and about the volunteers, said information identifying (1) for each of the persons with disabilities, at least one specific disability said person has, and (2) for each of the volunteers, at least one specific disability said volunteer is willing to assist;
- c) at least one of the persons with disabilities, using one of the wireless communications devices to transmit a request for help; and
- d) matching at least one of the volunteers with said at least one of the persons with disabilities by finding, through said database, one of the volunteers who is willing to assist with the specific disability said at least one of the persons with disabilities has, and said at least one of the volunteers receiving the request for help via one of the wireless communications devices.

17. (Once Amended) A program storage device according to Claim 14, wherein:
the step of establishing a database includes the steps of

- i) establishing a first database having information about the persons with disabilities, and
 - ii) establishing a second database having information about the volunteers; and
- the [searching] matching step includes the step of the network searching the first and second databases to select and match volunteers and people with disabilities.

18. (Once Amended) A program storage device according to Claim 14, wherein the [searching] matching step includes the step of:

using a matching server to search the people with disabilities and the volunteers to find a list
of candidate volunteers and methods of help;
sending a request to each of the candidate volunteers;
interacting with the candidate volunteers to find a final choice volunteer; and
sending a final request to the final choice volunteer.